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ANCIENT INDIAN SOCIETY AND MODERN MATERIALISM

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It has become a vogue in recent years to give an orientation of economic struggle to any fact of history and to dispute or at least ignore the heterogeneity of the historical process particularly when multiple social groups had engaged themselves in mutual disaffection. While no doubt, materialistic basis given to archaeological or ethnic data which unearth only material data would be rational, this slant may become a fallacy or grossly polemical when we try to weave an economic class-struggle into literary data, and that too of a period when sacerdotal religion and unorthodox schism against it had been tearing groups apart from one another, within a general frame work of a fairly stable and constitutional republican tribal states. Doctrinnaire materialism may, perhaps, succeed in showing cameos of economic struggle and oppression of money-power in certain isolated patches of historic and literary sources, but they fail to note the inherent complexity of human nature in the early Indian situation and also the more rational and valid geographical and climatic factors coming into operation. This would tend to give an altogether spurious hue to the basic perspective of ancient times. No doubt, it is the intelligentsia that likes to tread this anomalous path, and the distortions to the true image they produce is due to the ripples already existing

in the mirror of their reasoning. It has been contended, for instance by Kosambi,* that the ancient caste system was tied up with the means and relations of productions and property. It has been stated that the *ahimsa* cult of the Buddha was a rebuttal against the sacrifices of the Brahmins and against the successful war that these Brahmin advisers of kings engendered indirectly as a fruit of their sacrifices; that the traders disturbed by loss of cattle and commodities due to these sacrifices and wars, favoured and patronised Buddhism as a counter-blast; that old religion was all ritual and the protestant Buddhist faith was pure morality with no cult in it.

It would indeed be tedious to refute the underlying fallacy of this reasoning. It would be adequate, however, if without entering a caveat, a few known facts are recalled in order to refresh the memory which might have become atrophied by a surfeit of dialectical reasoning. It is well-known that caste war cannot produce a class war since caste is based upon the psychological and traditional attributes of socio-cultural status, while class is essentially an integer of material or economic inequality. While poor Brahmins may still consider themselves as better intellectually (and hence socially) endowed than even affluent Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas, this notion will produce only a caste conflict but not a class conflict. At no time in the economic history of our country have Brahmins been rich or affluent or mentally inclined to spear-head any class war, and indeed sacerdotal religion and Brahmins as its representatives have always been at the hands of the patrons of the same, be they Kṣatriya kings or Vaiśyas, and their influence on them had thus crystallised only in the form of invocation of God against any breach of righteousness or of regard for the guardians of hieratic worship and rituals. It would be needless to probe whether their guardianship of religion was self-imposed or was by common consent. Taking a conservative view of the situation, it may be presumed that their position in society was accepted on all hands as one of practitioners of Vedic

* See No. 6. under Select References.

religion alone. Ancient caste system might well have outlived its purpose in these days of social promiscuity and unabashed commercialisation of talent and effort, irrespective of the traditional background or hereditary vocation. But it could never be contended that the caste system, in its ancient setting, was primarily worked out with an evil purpose by some selfish or selfstyled priestly class. The very strength of caste in different living communities and levels indicates that it was in the very marrow of early Indian communities and was a mutually and severally accepted institution and was based upon the pooling of work and duties towards society by all men, proportionate to their capabilities, both physical and intellectual. The evils produced by the caste system are largely due to the perverted and distorted values put by individuals, be they of the Brahmin caste or other, on the merits of caste. Ancient society has not in fact shown any violent caste strife although, sectarian intolerance had been rife. This is not different from the intolerance of faith and ideology which are seen between two religions or as even between welfare state democracy and international communism as we see today. Thus it is curious in this connection to note that when set against another wholly different religion, all the caste groups in Hinduism join hands, and only when intercaste problems shoot up, they show conflict. This would mean that the caste strife operates within the frame work of Hindu religion and does not ever become a national virus or disease which can get priority over other national problems. On the other hand, communism is more insidious inasmuch as it seeks to divide even a single caste in two groups of the haves and have-nots and thus disrupts society and in the ultimate analysis tends to bring out a rigid capitalist and an irresponsible proletariat, ever eager to quarrel with one another, and in this disaffection, communism foments a class war.

Thus it would be wrong to state that Brahmins of yore were causing distress to the other castes and they had to be fought. When, however, it is even suggested that the cattle of Vaiśyas were systematically taken away by the Brahmins for their sacrifice, without any compensation and due to the heavy

losses thus caused to the traders, they retaliated by following and encouraging the Buddhist teachings, it becomes a totally misguided reasoning, since firstly, cattle were never known to have been taken away or seized by the Brahmins - they being never capable of it as a group - and even if some cows and sheep were used for *Yagnas* in the form of ghee, milk, cowdung, etc. primarily, they were not for the support of some king, but often for the enhancement of their own intellectual and moral merit. In any event, to present it as a large scale depredation of cattle, and secrifices involving the same as an orgy to help a king's victory or glory, is rather painting the picture too luridly without any warrant. There is no basis to guess that the ruling kings in ancient times were all totally under the thumb of the priestly class, although they were subject to the chastening influence of their *gurus*. *Ahimsa*, besides, is an integral part of the Hindu faith as well and to state that *ahimsa* was the weapon of the Buddhist against the Brahmanical religion would be ignoring facts of history. Besides, for kings to take to war was considered a legitimate occupation and it was entirely a political process and hardly having any religious basis. If eating of meat was part of the accepted code of the Kṣatriyas, performance of *yagnas*, *yāgas* and rituals was considered similarly an accepted code of conduct for the Brahmins. It would indeed be illogical to bring *ahimsa* as an exclusive weapon of Buddhism against Brahmanism.

The way even the earliest *Smṛtis* and *Dharma Śāstras* are speaking of the privileges of the Brahmins and their superiority over Kṣatriyas, the institution of a *purohita* or chaplain to the king, etc. and the apparent validity and currency these precepts and dicta had in the then existing society, lead us to believe that these were, by common consent based on the dissimilar physical, intellectual and mental powers of the different groups in society. Even in pre-Buddhistic time, we had tribal and other chiefs who ruled with the machinery namely, the king, *purohita*, *mantri*, *amātya*, besides the *prādvivaka* (Judge), *sabhya* and *sabhasada* and *dandika* and the *bandhanika*. *Gautama Dharmaśāstra* XI 2, stipulates for the king knowledge of the three Vedas and the philosophies, as also conquest of senses, while *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (III. 50) lays down

avoidance of indulgencc in hunting, gambling, drink and women and harshness of word and action. If this is so we have to conceive of a proper grooming of the king, in public interest, since the *Smṛti* authors had already implied that a country will have to be ruled by a king, who is the agent of Viṣṇu in this world and whose temporal power derives its authority from God and thus is subject to the spiritual powers of the Brahmanas who advise him and demonstrate good conduct and wisdom in actual practice. Reverting to the earlier question, namely, whether and if so at what stage, we find the rise of the physical division of society into the four *varṇas*, we can see that this has already happened in the late Vedic times. However, we may take it that this was only a theory at that time and had not received any consolidation in social practice. In fact, the mystic Vratya Hymns (Atharva XV 10, 3–4) indicate that Brahmana and Kṣatriya arose out of the Vratya (*i.e.* a person outside the ambit of Vedic society) and were duly institutionalised in the powers of Bṛahaspati and Indra respectively. As between the Brahmana and Kṣatriya we see also that in Ṛgvedic Hymns (X 149) and Atharva (V-89 ; and XII 8 ; XIII 3–1–25) the person, wife and property of the Brahmana was made inviolate against the Kṣatriya. This would seem to imply that at this earliest stage of social order, the tougher among the community took upon themselves the right of the ruling or leading the rest (see *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* XIII 1.9. 1-2 and *Aitarēya Brāhmaṇa* VIII 19) and it was given to the more learned or religious among them who had been the authors of the Vedic hymns, to conciliate them and establish a Brahma-Kṣatra combination which drew sustenance from the temporal and religious aspects of social life and which thus were paramount in society. The Kṣatriyas were apparently satisfied with this compromise despite the fact that their place in terms of status had been indicated as only next to the Brahmana who represents the Godly virtues and wisdom. That the Kṣatriya rulers at the very inception of this idea threatened and harassed the Brahmanas is apparent from the above quotations (and as directly emphasised by *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* VII-22-4) and the inter-dependence - established between them grew, in the subsequent

Smṛti and *Samhita* periods, into the dual institution of Kingship and Brahmanical privileges, as the symbol respectively of the temporal and spiritual potentialities of ordered society which at that distance of time could not but have had a king at the head. The freemen of the society were, nevertheless, already known in the Vedic times as the *Viś* and these became the next in order, namely, the Vaiśyas. It is equally apparent that there was a clear group of primitive, perhaps, indigenous and coarse folk who were either content with the task of attending upon the king, the Vedic ritualists and the common citizens engaged in various occupations, or did not have any productive or executive functions of their own other than catering to the manual labours required for the other three categories. It is interesting to note that it is the actual rough division of the community or society itself into these four groups of which numerically the Vaiśyas would have been the largest, and the Kṣatriyas the least in number that had been dedicted in the form of a creation myth in the *Puruṣa Sūkta* hymn (Ṛk X-90) of the last *maṇḍala* of Ṛgveda. Its chant during the sacrifices which were directed towards the welfare of their own society or kingdom against that of the neighbours, is a measure of the confirmation of the status mentioned therein for the four groups in society, by common consent. In this connection, it should be noted that while the *Brahmin purohita* officiated for the king in most of the *yāgas*, *yagnas*, etc. the daily ritual and fire oblations and sacrifices evolved for the Brahmin was for the purification of one's own mind and body and for attainment of Godhead. It had hardly anything to do with the other groups in society, indeed even the other Brahmins. They were intensely personal though undoubtedly they were extolling the spiritualism inherent in God's creation. It is essential also to bear in mind in this context that the Vedic ideas of social order as administered in the subsequent *Upaniṣadic* period takes into consideration the eternal and immutable law of life namely, *Dharma* or rectitude. By a metaphorical allusion to the fact that Brahmanical *Ṛṣis*, etc. might not have been able to prevail upon the Kṣatriya rulers of the kingdom always

in those early times, the *Brahadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (1–4, 11–15) which is the supplement to *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* clinches the basic concept of society as of righteousness, and states that *Dharma* is the *Kṣatra* of *Kṣatra* and every weak man can rule the stronger with the help of *Dharma*, as with the help of the king; and if a man declares what is *true*, they say he declares the *Dharma*, and if he declared the *Dharma*, then they say he declares what it *true*. We can, therefore, easily follow how *Sanātana* (eternal) *Dharma* and *Rājadharma*, so assiduously postulated in the subsequent *Smṛti*, Mauryan and classical periods, drew their authority from this cardinal principle of civilized and righteous life. It is no mere coincidence also that this word *Dharma* was also chosen by the Emperor Priyadarśi Aśōka to represent the core of the philosophy of his own, as he was fully conscious of the fact that the ancient people of his time knew well the traditional value of *Dharma* which is non-partisan, fruitful, and cultured in its application.

Thus, to brand the *dāna* or gift of villages to Brahmins by ancient kings as part of the *Dharma*, of which they were the watch-dogs, as an essentially selfish purpose and as the cause of social distress and unrest, would be a complete negation of historic reasoning. It is only an indication of the king's recognition of the basic economic vulnerability of the Brahmins, and of the ethical and intellectual quality of their activities. The king would have also seen the need of establishing these outposts of Godliness or religious activities in different parts of his realm. We have also, correspondingly, cases of many tradesman who had patronised Brahmanical Hinduism, as for example the guild of silk-weavers who migrated from Lata (Gujarat) to Dasapura (modern Mandsaur) and who caused a temple for Sūrya — (*Diptaraśmi*) to be built there.

It would be totally wrong to suggest that Buddhism sought to eradicate caste system in any way. Indeed, no such attempt was ever envisaged by Buddhism whose main

tenets were against killing of animals for food, and performance of elaborate sacrifices for the improvement of one's self when this, according to them, could be achieved by mere moral stature, right conduct, right speech, etc. — the Noble Eightfold Path to truth. The multifarious social and communal duties and functions of the different votaries of Buddhism continued to remain so and there was no regimentation of domestic or social life under it. Particularly it could be seen that Buddhism slowly prevailed upon the Vaiśya classes to give their wealth to the church and its activities, and thus gradually became a totally subsidised religion, as different from the free nature of Vedic religion. The view could in fact be hazarded that, in the ultimate analysis Buddhism died a natural death in the country of its birth, largely due to the fact that, beyond certain qualities of conduct and humane relationship, it did not carry any new outstanding intellectual message which Brahmnical Hinduism did not possess already. When it ultimately degenerated in quality and faded, it was largely due to the fact that its latter-day esoteric character was totally at variance with the healthy ethical religion it was at first and also because the patronage that it was receiving from the trading classes gradually began to decrease owing to the loss of mass appeal for its involved ritual dogmas apart from the lowering of its inner morality in monastic activities. Thus its disappearance as a rebel religion was, to a degree, caused by the eternal, resilient, and all-embracing values of Hinduism. The original message of the Buddha, chief elements of which were compassion and knowledge of self, was addressed to the mass mind and not to the organs of the social fabric of his times. It was indeed only Jainism which made *ahimsa* its chief credo and even reduced it to a formal cult.

It has been accepted on all hands that some of the early Indian tribal groups were in republican status and had many of the outward organs of incipient democratic order. Even under subsequent monarchical dynastic rule, there was considerable administrative and judicial machinery which prevented any gross misuse of social or religious status by

anyone. The Mauryan and classical Gupta administrations saw to it that the pace and programmes of the various communities were not only well ordered but strictly enforced according to the traditions and needs of society, and there is every reason to deduce that they were functioning with a considerable measure of success. There had further been concepts of purification, expiation and raising of social status by proper activities and these implied that there was an element of flexibility in the scope for success of achievement for anyone and no artificial barriers were existing. Even kings who were of a lower caste, sometimes performed *Asvamedha* mainly to raise their clan status, as for example, some of the Śatavāhana kings. On no basis can it be contended that there was a constitutional stricture on any community or caste to raise itself from its traditional status to a higher status as per its own ambitions. In so far as the *varṇa* or caste was itself based on the traditional avocation, no community was deemed less important in society and the nature of activities of a community was no index of its importance or status. Since traditional skills were not acquired but were most often inherited, the caste system was fundamentally functioning on this footing of enlightened collective enterprise. Education and social contacts might mainly help in widening one's vision and improving their personal accomplishments, but they would prove false if the traditional skills were lost sight of by any community and recourse taken to other skills. It is this concept which is crystallised in the Bhagavad Gītā epigram.[1]

In the monarchical types of Government which were the most outstanding traditional cultures of ancient India, we may have one erring or profligate ruler to every score of benign and trustworthy ones. Besides, the entire scheme was so carefully framed as to prevent any open friction between the ruler and the subjects; the agricultural assets of the people were safe-guarded, and material inequalities so

1. *Sreyān Svadharmo viguṇaḥ*
Paradharmāt Svanuṭṣitāt | *Bh. Gī.* III-35.

diligently guarded against on the traditional basis of the doctrines of Manu, Kautilya and others that the king was the source and symbol of social and material justice to the subjects and could not deviate from the accepted code of conduct. In fact, paper democracies of the present day without traditions can breed potentially greater corruption than benevolent monarchies of yore. Further, the conventional and ingrained appreciation of art, beauty and pageantry which is a feature of the common Indian citizen, was well nourished by the custom and colour that grew around royalty and court. The state (within its boundaries) became the universe for the inhabitants, and this is only too well brought out by the countless *Praśastis* which occur in all grants, inscriptions, etc. Questions of any proletarian movement or class war in such a context was bordering on the impossible. Indeed, if anything, to the already existing dimensions of caste and community, a third dimension, namely region, had been introduced, and the citizen of one state looked upon those of a contiguous state almost as outsiders. Indeed, this could be counted among the main ill-effects of the smaller monarchies, that they created parochialism. On the other hand caste and community could often cross the boundaries of one's own region, and this is, in a sense, proof of the ingrained universality of the caste system. While on temporal matters, there was much reluctance to identify each other's interests between two different regions, in the matter of caste, we could see the facile commingling of two persons of the same caste in two areas wide apart, the caste almost serving as a common bond. This was due to caste having been built on religious foundations and unified by it. In the higher level, religion was similarly, a sure bond between two geographically disparate areas where different craft and art impulses prevailed, and hence these received patronage at any place where they could sell, since art subserved religion in the main as a socio-cultural vehicle, and this again produced a major element in the integration of differing tastes and attitudes. Thus caste, religion and art with their built-in inter-relationship, had developed to be the prominently

discernible factors of unifying potentialities in the socio-cultural life of ancient India and the minds of people did not work in the directions of feudal inequality or class war, owing to the existence of these cementing factors. The role that these could play for cementing national bonds is indeed ever present. On the other hand, communism, thriving as it does on class war, is interested in breaking up traditional bonds between men as produced by religion and art, so that man can be divided against man, for the vindication of the ideology of class war — the corner stone of dialectical materialism.

It would thus be uncharitable to look upon the old institution of caste, on its original academic and functional basis, to be anti-national. Narrow mindedness wherever it is, whether in the caste practices or in party politics, should be unequivocally condemned and weeded out, but to take caste as fundamentally a symptom of disintegration and more dangerous than a narrow political ideology with extra national loyalties and pulls, would be the very antithesis of truth and social well-being.

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K. S. RAMACHANDRAN

ADDENDA

BANERJEE, N. R. International Conference on Asian Archaeology. Summaries of papers. Section 2, No. 3, pp, 26-28, 1961.

The Chronology of Megaliths in South India — A Review.

The impact of the neolithic and chalcolithic periods (1500-800 B.C.) as seen at Brahmagiri would affect the chronology of the megaliths in South India. The author links up the cairn burials in Persian and Baluch Makran with the South Indian megalithic burials, the connecting link being the dolmens in the neighbourhood of Karachi. He is of the opinion that the Dravidian speakers were indigenous people inhabiting the whole of the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent who were gradually pushed towards the south by the Āryans. The movement was not violent. *En route* the cultural milieu was picked up from the chalcolithic people and developed into a lasting culture of the South. This seems to have happened around 700 B.C. and considerably before 300 B.C.

BANERJEE, N. R. TASSI: Silver Jubilee Volume, pp. 180-189, 1962.

Megalithic builders of South India were Dravidian speakers —A Review.

The paper is dealt with under three sub-headings:

(i) the theory of Haimendorf vis-a-vis Burrow;

(ii) the Sangam literature; and

(iii) the Dravidian speakers as autochthonous in South India with concluding remarks at the end.

(i) As opposed to Haimendorf's postulation (see item No. 78 of this bibliography) Burrow is of the opinion that the

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*Continued from Vol. LIII Page 154.

Dravidian speakers, originally inhabiting the north-western portion of the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent, were pushed back towards the south in due course. Burrow rests mostly on linguistic evidence and literary sources and assigns *C.* 1500 to 1200 B.C. for the linguistic contact. He is of the opinion that the main influence, as gleaned from the epics, Pāli and Prākṛt literatures was north Dravidian, which must have happened during the period of the Mauryas or the Nandas.

(ii) Discussing the evidence from the Sangam literature (300 B.C. – 300 A.D.) the author claims a date earlier than 300 B.C. for the Dravidian speakers. He is of the opinion that the Brahui speakers were stragglers along the border during the southern movement of the Dravidian speakers.

(iii) Main points for discounting the autochthonous theory are the following:

(a) There is lack of evidence for the simultaneous development of megalithism and iron in South India as seen from the absence of the rudimentary pioneering steps.

(b) The megalithic folk were intruders into the primitive folk of the Deccan. This would imply a fresh impetus into the south. Though the Āryans could have accorded the moving force we cannot link them with the death cult as megalithism had no place in their ritual.

(c) The linguistic contribution of Dravidian to the oldest Ṛgvedic language of the Āryans could not have taken place in the south.

Concluding the author says that the Dravidian speakers inhabiting the north-western part of India at or before the Ṛgvedic times were pushed towards the south in due course, where they introduced megalithism and the attendant cultural milieu, some of which they picked up *en route.* [245]

CHANDRASEKHARAN, N. IA: 1960–61, p. 58.

(*a*) *Megalithic site, District Cannanore.*

At Cherunthazham an umbrella stone was noticed.

(*b*) *Rock cut caves, Districts Cannanore and Kozhikode.*

Discovery of rock cut caves at Pattanur-Pazhassi, Koleri, Payam, Kannavaram, Kolavallur, Panniyannur, Kuttur, Eruvassi, Kanjirode, Ezhom, Kadambur, Mavilayi, Eruvatti, Memunda and Cherode is mentioned. The last two sites are in District Kozhikode, while the rest fall within the limits of District Cannanore.

DESIKAN, SRINIVASA V. N. IA: 1960–61, p. 18.

Exploration in District Coimbatore.

Cairn circles at various places in the Dharmpuri (Dharapuram) Avinashi and Erode Taluks are noticed. The sites at Vilakethi, Pasur, Kongalnagaram and Nataukkalpalayam revealed cist burials.

Urn burials were observed in the Dharmpuri (Dharapuram) and Pollachi Taluks.

DIRECTOR, Department of Archæology, Kerala State. IA: 1960–61, pp. 58-59.

(*a*) *Megaliths, District Kozhikode.*

Discovery of cists and cairn circles at Edakkal and Nenmenni.

(*b*) *Megaliths, Districts Quilon and Palghat.*

Cists and stone circles were noticed at Poothamkaira (Quilon) and Pallaveer (Palghat).

(*c*) *Rock Cut Caves, District Trichur.*

From the caves at Ponnani and Koonamoochi, Black-and-red ware and iron implements were obtained.

GUPTA, PABITRA and DUTTA, PRATAP CH. M.I.: Vol. 42 pp. 19-34, 1962.

Human Remains Excavated from Megaliths at Yelleswaram (Āndhra Pradesh).

The study of the cranial (numbering six) and skeletal (a few long bones) revealed the following important features.

There were equal number of male and female skulls. One male skull was hyper-brachycranic and two brachycranic. Of the female skulls one was meso; one dolicho and the other brachycranic. The skulls are evencephalic in cranical capacity and hypscranic in the length-auricular-height index. Stature of these people seem to be above medium to tall.

The general morphology and the metric characters do not favour an autochthonous theory. These skulls are compared with those from Sialk IV and northern Persians, indicating a Scythio-Iranian affinity.

The authors feel that the study of Yelleswaram skulls offer support to the findings and conclusion of Sarkar (See item 183 of Bibliography) regarding the Brahmagiri skeletal remains.

KHAN, MOD. ABDUL WAHEED — Āndhra Pradesh Archaeological Series XIV, pp. 1-69, with plates, 1963.

A monograph on Yelleswaram excavations.

Of the six periods revealed through excavation, the megalithic period (Period I) assignable to the middle of the Second-First Centuy B.C. is the earliest. No habitational vestiges of the megalithic period was discovered. Four types of burials are noticed.

Type 1. A dolmenoid cist with a partition stone slab which divided roughly into two halves or compartments but without a port-hole.

Type 2. A cist with a port-hole containing a small cist within it.

Type 3. A cairn circle.

Type 4. An urn burial confined to infants or adults.

Constructional details, interments inside *viz.* iron objects, pottery and skeletal remains are recounted. A Red ware pot on the top of the capstone of type 2 contained splinters of charred bones. The plan of the cist is clockwise swastika unlike that of Brahmagiri where it is anti clockwise. The cairn circle enclosing

a pit entombed a double skeleton one upon the other in a fully extended and articulated position—a very rare feature indeed. Along with this bones of an animal, probably horse was also found. The skeletal remains were laid on an ashy deposit. The urn containing the skeletal remains of an infant or adult had for its lid an inverted bowl and was found in the north-west quadrant of a stupa below the Historical period. Another burial of this culture was found in a pit with north-south orientation under the enclosure wall of the temple complex. Pottery consists of all Black, all Red and Black-and-red ware. They are generally burnished with a smooth pebble or bone tool. Interesting is a circular stand of Black ware with triangular and rectangular perforations on its sides.

Iron objects included javelins, sickles, tanged daggers, lances etc. [250]

KHAZANCHI, T. N. et. el. IA: 1960–61, p. 11.

Excavation at Burzahom, District Srinagar.

The third phase at Burzahom represents the megalithic complex. Excavation of a monument where only six vertical stones forming a rough semi circle present did not reveal its purpose clearly. But it can be said that the megalith was erected towards the end of the neolithic period.

The associated occupational deposits yielded specimens of black burnished pottery, coarse in fabric and in polish low order polished stone axes and bone tools. The dominant ware was wheel turned Red ware. Distinct in shape is the miniature vase which might have been either used as toy or for ritualistic purposes.

KOSAMBI, D. D. Man: Vol. LXII, No. 108, 1962.

Megaliths in Poona District.

In this article, the author gives the location and description of monuments which, in his opinion, are megalithic. Microliths are also found near them. Cup marks due to the constant rubbing with mullers are found in some of the rocks here. In most of the well preserved megalithic sites the prevailing modern cult is that of the Mother Goddess.

KRISHNAMURTI, C. IA: 1960–61, p. 65.

Megalithic sites, District Mysore.

Cists and Cairn circles were noticed in Chamarajanagar and Yelandur Taluks.

Lal, B. B. The Illustrated London News, No. 6455, Vol. 242, pp. 579-581, April, 20, 1963. Archaeological Section No. 2133.

The only Asian expedition in the threatened Nubia: Work by an Indian Mission at Afyeh and Tumas.

The work of the mission has, besides enriching the knowledge on Nubian Stone Age, brought to light evidences bearing upon the cultural relationship between Nubia and South India in the second-first millenium B.C.

The author excavated one hundred and nineteen graves at Tumas of the 'C' Group people. The short article, apart from dealing with earlier cultures, affords a vivid description of the burial pits entombed by cairn circles and the internment inside. The body was wrapped in a mat shroud and laid in a contracted position. Fragments of cloth and personal ornaments recovered would lead us to believe that the dead body, before being lowered into the grave, was fully clothed and bedecked with ornaments; etc. Of particular interest were the twin pits separated by a thin partition within a common stone circle. Of the attendant funerary pottery, placed in the pit at the body level and mostly near the head region fringing the stone circle, special mention may be made of the Black-and-red ware and Red ware ring-stands closely similar to those found in the megalithic monuments of peninsular India.

Common to the Nubian and South Indian megalithic burials are (i) bounding circles, (ii) capstones, and (iii) stone lining in the pit (single instance). It may, however, be mentioned that though the date of the South Indian megaliths could be pushed back a little earlier, it is difficult, at the present stage of research, to establish contemporaneity with the Nubian tombs of this group

of the second millennium B.C. Furthermore excepting Maski, the skeletal remains from the megaliths of the peninsular India are, as a rule, fractional. The Nubian pits show articulated skeleton in contracted postures. South Indian monuments belong essentially to the Iron Age whereas in Nubia this metal is completely absent. But then the ancestral stage of the megalithic Black-and-red pottery could be traced to Bahal in the Tapti Valley where it is pre-iron.

Concluding, the author says "......there may be more than meets the eye in the ceramic and structural similarity between south Indian and Nubian examples." Advocating a thorough investigation of intermediary region of coastal Arabia and Persia, he believes that there is more substance in the theory of an "Arabian Sea Cultural Pool" formulated by Sir Mortimer recently.

(See also "Nile Excavations – Indian Team's Finds" – *Link Indian News Magazine*, Vol. No. 51, July 29, 1962, p. 39.)

RAMACHANDRAN, K. S. QJMS: Vol. LI, pp. 170-172 1961.

Bridle bits from Indian Megaliths

Horse bits obtained from the excavated megalithic burials in India are classified and described. Parallels from elsewhere are also cited. [255]

GLOSSARY

Standardized nomenclature is a desideratum for any research, much more so with regard to the Megaliths in India. Ever since these monuments were noticed (in the second quarter of the nineteenth century), each author had been using his own terminology, often without regard to that of the others with the result that the same type of monument was termed differently. This state of affairs continued till about the second half of the twenteieth century, when Krishnaswami realising the long felt necessity introduced a standardised nomenclature, which since then has been adopted by the Archaeological Survey of India and many other Orgnisations and Research Institutions in India. The relevant definitions of the megalithic types, as set out by four among the pioneers in these studies *viz.* Krishnaswami, Taylor, Mackenzie and Breeks have been tabulated below. These have been gathered from the respective works of these authors (Krishnaswami V.D. 'Megalithic types of South India' *Ancient India No. 5*; Meadows Taylor, *Megalithic Tombs and other Ancient Remains in the Deccan*, republished in book form by the Hyderabad Archaeological Department in 1941 ; J. S. F. Mackenzie, 'On the Rude Stone Archaeology of Hassan District', *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. II, 1873; and J. W. Breeks, '*Account of the Primitive Tribes and Monuments of the Nilgiris, 1837)*. As far as possible the language of the authors has been retained so that the reader could easily follow what the original writer wanted to convey. An attempt has also been made to correlate the difinitions of other authors with that of Krishnaswami so that one could easily understand and compare notes with the earlier published material.

KRISHNASWAMI	TAYLOR	MACKENZIE	BREEKS
Alignment: A Series of menhirs planted in lines on a definite pattern.			
Avenue: Two or more alignments approximately parallel with each other.	**Avenue:** Diagonal lines or parallelograms: These are large rocks which have been placed regularly in diagonal lines with open squares between each four rocks, most probably intended for cairns.		
Barrows: Barrow or earthen mound concealing urns or sarcophagus. Usually the site is indicated by the low spread of chips of granite over individual barrows.		**Barrow:** All mounds raised above the level of the ground without any circle of stones to mark the edge.	**Barrow:** A mound of earth encircled by a ditch and sometimes also by one or more circles of stones.
Cairn: A mound of heaped up stone rubble.		**Cairns:** Heaps of small stones whether surrounded by a circle or not.	**Cairns:** A circular enclosure formed by a rough stone wall or heap or single stones.
Cairn Circle: Comprises of a stone circle surrounding a cairn. Beneath the cairn is found a single, multiple urns or a terracotta legged sarcophagus.	**Cairns & Barrows:** They consist of circles of large stones sometimes single, sometimes double enclosing a space under which is a grave or graves, a stone chest or chests in which bodies and sometimes funeral urns have been deposited. (Also see Krishnaswami's cist)	**Circles:** Circle of stones where the enclosed area is on level with the surrounding ground. The size of the stones which mark the circumference being immaterial. **Tumuli:** All mounds raised above the level of the ground having a circle of stones.	
Cist: A cist is a box-like grave built of stone slabs normally below the natural surface of the ground. Usually, but not necessarily, it consists of a single stone of orthostat for each side and a cover or capstone on its top. It may also have a floor stone. One of the orthostat has sometimes a circular, semi-circular or trapezoidal opening which is known as port-hole. Such a cist is known as 'port-hole cist'. Variant is the transcepted cist with antechamber. A port-hole is present in the main cist wall which partitions the two. The septum dividing the cist into roughly equal halves is always oriented east–west. One half not approached through the antechamber is again divided into upper and lower by a horizontal slab with separate port-holes one below the other for approach. It is demarcated by stone circles. When the cist is underground it is covered by a cairn. This type is restricted to the Pudukkottai region.	**Kistvaen:** Erections smaller than cromlechs constructed on the same principle but closed on all sides. In some of them a circular hole six to nine inches in diameter exists in one of the sides.	**Kistvaen:** Any structure found under the present surface of soil in barrows, tumuli or circles.	**Kistvaen:** A vault of large stone slabs closed on every side but sometimes with a round hole in one of the walls, with or without a surrounding stone circle or tumulus.
Dolmen: A single slab of stone supported by several orthostatic boulders or slabs built on the surface of the ground in such a way as to enclose a space or chamber beneath the capstone. It may or may not be wholly or partially covered by a barrow or cairn. A dolmen may be with or without part-hole. A number of dolmens surrounded by a single stone circle is known as multiple dolmens.	**Cromlechs:** Constructed with three stones or slates placed edgeways in the ground enclosing three sides of a square or parallelogram as supports or walls with one at top as a cover, usually larger than others and having one side open, usually north or north-west. There is usually also a flooring slab.	**Dolmen:** Stone structures above or partially above ground without the circle of stones.	**Cromlechs:** Similar enclosure like Kistvaen, open on one side.
Dolmenoid cists: A burial chamber made of stones both for the sides and the cap, the whole circumscribed by a single stone-circle or sometimes by double stone circles.		**Cromlechs:** Stone structures above or partially above ground and which are surrounded by a circle of stones.	
Variants: (a) In the northern lateritic region of Chingleput			

KRISHNASWAMI	TAYLOR	MACKENZIE	BREEKS
District it is made of dressed lateritic boulders to form a rectangular chamber. Dressing is only on the inner side. Sometimes the cist chamber is visible one or two feet above the ground level. It is more a cist than a dolmen. (b) Granite rocks are used both for chamber and bounding circle. Capstone rests on the orthostats, which may be single or multiple. The whole monument resembles more a cist than a dolmen. When the chamber is low the cairn filling covers the entire capstone. (c) The rude stone orthostats are almost completely buried so that the capstone poised upon them appears at ground level. Cairn packing sometimes conceals the whole including the capstone.			
Hood stone : A dome shaped dressed lateritic stone resting with its flat face directly on the ground level. Local name is *Kudaikallu*. Multiple hood stones are those where several hoodstones at ground level are surrounded by a circle of sectorally dressed clinostatic lateritic stones, all tending to converge at the top.			
Menhir : A single monolith set up as a rule at or near a burial spot. The monolith may be small or gigantic in height with its base fixed in the earth.		**Menhirs :** Standing monoliths whether plain or ornamented.	
Rock cut caves : Caves scooped out into the lateritic rock. The dome is vaulted. The plan is either oblong or circular. Sometimes benches are found. In a few cases central pillar is also noticed.			
Topikal : Each topikal rests upon four quadrantal clinostatic stones joining up together at the base into a square and dressed up to give the shape of a truncated paraboloid to the entire monument. The topikal or hat stone rests on the truncated surface.			

PRATIBHĀ *

(Some Analogies in Ancient Western Thought)

K. Guru Dutt, I.A.S. (Retd.)

IV

From poetry and religion, it is but a step to art and morality. With the Greeks, aesthetics and ethics interpenetrated each other: the good was also the beautiful. In Sophocles we find the idea of a natural agreement between duty and pleasure, which is at once beauty and moral order. Isocrates, the great orator, said: "Beauty is the first of all things, nothing that is devoid of beauty is prized....... The admiration for virtue comes to this, that of all manifestations of life, virtue is the most beautiful." The supremely beautiful was for the Greeks, instinctively, the supremely divine.

In this respect, they were the very opposite of the Hebrews who hated all art and whose morality lay in the deadly choice between the irreconcilable principles of good and evil. It has been said that Greek morality was not a conflict of light and darkness, but an artistic balance of light and shade: a relativism which would appear as immoral to those inclined towards the absolutist morality of the Hebrews with their rigid commandments. Aristotle says in his Poetics, that if we wish to ascertain whether an act is, or is not, morally right, we must consider not merely the intrinsic quality of the act, but the person who does it, the person to whom it is done, the time, the means, the motive. Passages closely parallel to this are to be found in the *Mahābhārata*, explaining the subtle complexities of *Dharma*.

The Greeks viewed the whole of life as an art, comparable to music and dancing. But the distinguishing character of Greek art generally, whether as applying to the art of living, or to the specifically fine arts like sculpture, is that it is primarily anthropocentric, humanised, perhaps over-humanised. In their mythology, the gods were all too human, and it was on this score

* Continued from Vol. LIV Page 40.

that some early Greek thinkers took exception to them. Xenophanes had suggested that if gods could be conceived by oxen or lions, they would no doubt appear as lions and oxen, just as the Greek gods assume the forms of men and women. Xenophanes, himself a pupil of Anaximander, preferred to envisage human problems against the cosmic background. His outlook, in keeping with the Ionian tradition, was monistic, or as usually styled—pantheistic. But deeply embedded in the Greek temperament from the very start, was a proneness to circumscribe all activity and even speculation within the purely human radius. In its fully developed form it became "Humanism", the specifically Greek contribution to European civilization, the ideal whose revival at the close of the Middle Ages set going the Renaissance.

The implications of this attitude were manifested throughout the range of Greek life, in their mythology and art, and especially in their ethics and politics (literally devotion to the City State.) Its philosophic involvements were first exploited by the Sophists. Originally the word "Sophist" meant wise man (*cf.* Sufi). Later it came to be applied exclusively to paid teachers of rhetoric and philosophy who as a class seem to have been free-thinkers well advanced in the "activity of disbelief," respecting neither the sanctities of art nor of religion. Their lineage can be traced to Zeno, a pupil of Parmenides, whom Aristotle has called "the father of dialectics." Zeno was the founder of the Eleatic school, which was the *bete noir* of Plato and Aristotle who dubbed the Eleatics "interruptors of the course of the world." Plato derides the Sophists as quibblers and charlatans. Walter Pater has pictured Sophistic thought as an infection: "The philosophic mind will perhaps never be quite in health, quite sane or natural again."

Protagoras, one of the best known among them, after whom one of Plato's Dialogues is named, held that all knowledge is relative, and that Being is identical with Seeming, and that "Man is the measure of all things, of those which exist and of those which have no existence," a declaration which may be called the charter of philosophical humanism.

It was then in Greece that, in the words of Rabindranath Tagore, man divorced from his setting in nature, really commenced to dance on "the single-rope of humanity." The limitations of everyday human life became the boundaries of human thought also. Reason in the restricted sense of the discursive intellect, as exhibited in dialectic, became the accredited instrument of philosophy. Professor A. E. Taylor regards the Socrates of Plato as no historical figure, not even a mask of Plato himself, but simply as the fictitious "hero of the Platonic drama." The real Socrates appears in the contemporary popular Greek Drama as a minor Sophist, an inferior Diogenes, but a sufficiently intriguing and original personality, although far removed from the idealized picture of him drawn by Plato and Xenophon. It is a sign of the times, that the reputation of the Sophists which for long was unsavoury, is at last rising in our own times, and it has become possible for a modern historian of philosophy to say of Protagoras that "the greatness of this man can hardly be measured." Certain phases of contemporary thought like Philosophical Analysis and Logical Positivism can be traced downwards to their roots in the negativist tendencies of the Sophists of antiquity. But their importance in our context arises through the influence that their way of thinking had on Socrates, and through him on Plato, who holds the master-key to all subsequent European thought.

In opposition to the old Ionian thinkers, Socrates was convinced that the human mind cannot penetrate the mystery of the Cosmos and that all metaphysical speculation was futile. The wise man should be content with examining his own life, finding out what is good and following it. Plato in his Phaedo makes Socrates describe this reorientation coming over him as a sort of change of heart. It has been said that this was a crisis not merely in his individual life but in the history of European thought itself. As Aristotle says, Socrates was the founder of ethics as a science. He used the dialectic method of the Sophists to convince his hearers of their own ignorance, but his conclusion was that virtue was knowledge, and that man had only to know the good

in order to follow it. The limitations of his own approach were known to him, as evidenced by his famous "irony". In any case, Plato was fully aware of them.

But there was another side to Socrates' nature: he was a mystic of sorts, subject to prolonged trances, and conscious of an inner "voice" (Daimon). But on the whole this side was subordinated to the love of reasoning. In 399 B C. at the age of seventy he was condemned to death by a majority of five votes in the Assembly of five hundred of his fellow-citizens on the charge of bringing new gods to Athens and also of corrupting the youth of the city. It has been suggested that the conservatives of Athens were scandalized by his bold teaching setting reason above authority. Or it may be that they instinctively sensed something subversive in his teaching, going contrary to their deepest intuitions. Down underneath the whole of Greek life lay a mythopoeic sense and concern with the unnamed, a respect for the unknown. When Aristotle said that in all natural things there is something marvellous or superhuman (Daimonia), he was echoing Heraclitus who is reported to have exclaimed in the kitchen: "Here too there are gods!" So Socrates' attempt to rationalise everything must have struck them as dangerously impious. Otherwise their verdict is inexplicable to us.

(*To be continued*)

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